

**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

NEIL L. BRADLEY
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT &
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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the workforce provisions included in H.R. 2, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018.

One of the most common concerns expressed by Chamber members regardless of size, industry, or location is the increasing difficulty and, in some cases, inability to fill open positions with qualified, skilled applicants. For example, in the most recent [USG – U.S. Chamber Commercial Construction Index](#), 65% of small contractors reported having difficulty finding skilled workers. Survey data across other industries show similar results.

Skilled worker shortages have the potential to hold back business expansion and economic growth.

For that reason, we are pleased the 2018 Farm Bill includes meaningful work/job training requirements for able-bodied adults receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Many SNAP recipients are already working; many more wish to be working. Guaranteeing SNAP recipients a spot in an employment and training program and requiring that able-bodied adults participate in such a program, or otherwise find employment, advance two important goals.

First, work requirements are likely to increase the size of the labor force. Of the 19 million non-elderly adult SNAP recipients in FY 2016, 8.3 million or 43% were not in the labor force and not looking for work. This significantly exceeds the number of non-elderly adult SNAP recipients who were disabled (4.3 million). The work/job training requirement will cause many SNAP recipients to reenter the labor force.

Second, the expanded availability of workforce training programs made possible by the bill would help individuals acquire the skills they need to find gainful employment. In FY 2016, only 2.2 million non-elderly adult SNAP recipients participated in an employment and training program. H.R. 2 would increase funding for employment training to \$1 billion a year and would define training programs to include those authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA training programs focus on in-demand industries and occupations; this should be required of all training programs funded under the bill. While more could be done to integrate the work requirements with WIOA, the additional funds provided, the focus on quality programs tied to workforce needs, and the work/job training requirement would result in a much larger number of SNAP recipients accessing job training services that have the best chance of helping them secure future employment.

Addressing shortages in the American workforce will require a multi-faceted approach. Work requirements for public assistance programs combined with job training programs must be part of the solution. We look forward to working with members of Congress to advance common-sense policies, including the workforce provisions of H.R. 2.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Neil L. Bradley", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Neil L. Bradley